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Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

CONTENTS

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 101: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE CONVENING OF A UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mrs. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Kazakstan) said that all States should take concerted positive measures to reform the economy and focus on major development issues. Kazakstan, like other countries in transition, was currently implementing a comprehensive structural reform programme in order to establish a market economy. It had already made appreciable progress in price liberalization, reform of the financial and economic management of enterprises, privatization, the development of entrepreneurship and the reduction of inflation. Those results could only be consolidated if the world community and international organizations continued to support the Country, taking into account its medium-term economic potential.

2. Kazakstan supported the strengthening of coordination among all those assisting countries in transition, particularly UNDP and other United Nations bodies. Their contribution should, however, be more efficient and dynamic and better focused, in order to facilitate the recipient countries' access to world markets and to allow them to attract foreign investment.

3. Cooperation between the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific should be intensified. As proposed in 1993 by the President of Kazakstan, it might also be possible to set up a United Nations Commission for Central Asia.

4. Current geo-economic trends reflected the emergence and strengthening of world economic centres in North America, Europe and South-East Asia. In order to remain stable and effective, however, those centres would have to establish economic and trade relations with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, particularly Kazakstan.

5. With reference to the follow-up to the agenda for development, Kazakstan considered that cooperation for development at a global level required a partnership based on commonality of interests and the mutual needs of States, a multilateral system centred upon the United Nations, the strengthening of links between the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions, and supporting action at the national and international levels.

6. Kazakstan welcomed the efforts to support the newly independent land-locked States of Central Asia but thought they should be intensified through increased technical cooperation and financial assistance. The World Trade Organization augured well in that regard. Kazakstan hoped for increased access to international markets through non-discriminatory treatment and most-favoured-nation status.

7. Lastly, priority should be given to the protection of the environment, which was one of the main dimensions of development. The international community should give special financial assistance to restore the Aral Sea region. The contamination of a vast area around the former Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground and the degradation of the Caspian Sea ecosystem were

also ecological disasters that threatened the country's economic activity and were impeding economic and social reforms.

8. Mr. PARK (Republic of Korea) said that while the fifty years which had passed since the establishment of the United Nations had been marked by significant progress in the field of development - increased income and levels of consumption in developing countries, increased life expectancy, a drop in child mortality rates and improved access to education - much remained to be done, since one fifth of the world's population continued to live in absolute poverty and more than 100 million children had no access to primary education. Unemployment, the gap between rich and poor and the growth of poverty were other problems which had to be solved.

9. Despite a slight decline in growth, the global economy was improving. Many countries, particularly in Africa, needed the assistance of the international community and the measures taken by the United Nations in that respect were very welcome. His Government intended to increase its official development assistance and to provide technical training to over 30,000 people by the year 2010. In collaboration with UNIDO, it had already organized in Seoul a workshop on industrial polices and strategies of relevance to Africa which had been very successful. Trade was essential for the development of developing countries, and world trade was expected to increase, boosted by the establishment of the World Trade Organization. It was therefore important to help the least developed countries cope with the effects that the globalization of the world economy would have on their export competitiveness.

10. There was an observable liberalization of regional trade thanks to the creation of free-trade areas and customs unions. While it had not been clearly established whether regionalism was complementary or inimical to multilateralism, care should be taken to ensure that regional economic arrangements contributed to the development of multilateral trade.

11. The Republic of Korea welcomed the efforts of the open-ended working group on the agenda for development. The international community should formulate effective measures for sustainable development in all countries, while strengthening the role of the United Nations.

12. The implementation of Agenda 21 and other instruments adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was proceeding, but only the efforts of each Government and cooperation between developing and developed countries would bring about the sustainable development recommended in Rio. The Republic of Korea welcomed the opportunity it had been given to participate in the intergovernmental panel on forests of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Another problem which needed priority attention if sustainable development was to be achieved was the fight against poverty, and in that respect it was important to ensure the follow-up at the national and international levels of the United Nations Conferences on environment, population, social development and women.

13. With regard to operational activities for development, field coordination should be strengthened under the guidance of the resident coordinators, as suggested by UNDP. His Government intended to increase its voluntary

contribution to the operational activities of the United Nations by 65 per cent in 1996.

14. Given the enormous potential of South-South cooperation, States and relevant international organizations should give assistance to developing countries in the form of triangular funding arrangements.

15. Mr. ELTINAY (Sudan) endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Philippines speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and added that the gap between rich and poor countries was widening as a result of current economic relations, which were contributing to the deterioration of the social and economic situation in the developing countries.

16. The developed countries had not provided the resources that they had undertaken to provide to the developing countries, redirecting them instead towards other countries which needed them less. In his report on the indebtedness of the developing countries (A/50/379), the Secretary-General mentioned the political and economic problems which were hindering development and which provided proof that the efforts made by the developing countries to reform their economies, either on their own initiative or pursuant to International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programmes, were inadequate without increased multilateral and bilateral assistance. The developing countries were crushed under the weight of their debt, in addition to being the victims of internal conflicts which hampered their development even more.

17. The international community must act more responsibly. The selfish behaviour of some countries stripped the notion of partnership for development of all meaning. Partial solutions no longer sufficed; bold measures needed to be taken in order to put an end to that long nightmare once and for all, by first forgiving the debt of all the developing countries without exception and then creating solutions which were fair for all.

18. Faced with the withdrawal of foreign assistance and an imposed war in the south, the Sudan, anxious to preserve its independence and sovereignty, had decided to rely only on its own resources. Thanks to realistic and well-thought-out programmes, it had achieved food self-sufficiency, increased exports, consolidated its small businesses, freed exchange rates and prices, reinforced the role of the private sector, strengthened the education, health and transport sectors, privatized many public companies, promoted investment and trade, and was involving its citizens in the running of the country. Thus, over the preceding four years its economy had grown at a rate of eight per cent, proving that developing countries could find ways to face their problems after all.

AGENDA ITEM 101: INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE CONVENING OF A UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT (A/50/479)

19. Mr. CHAMIE (Director, Population Division, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA)) said that in accordance with paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 49/127 the Secretary-General had designated the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy

Analysis (DESIPA) as the focal point for the preparation of a report on international migration and development which the Economic and Social Council had taken note of in its decision 1995/313.

20. In order to prepare the report, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis had solicited the views of all the Member States regarding the convening of a United Nations international conference on international migration and development. Because of the high level of non-response, it was not possible to assess how far the responses obtained represented the views of all Governments.

21. Of the 43 Governments responding, 19 suggested that such a conference would be premature and that the question of migration should be examined within the framework of existing mechanisms. Another four Governments, though more favourable to the possibility of convening an international conference, felt that more work was necessary to establish an agenda for political negotiations, in particular by identifying areas of possible agreement and promoting an exchange of views at the regional level. The remaining 20 countries were generally in favour of convening an international conference but expressed a variety of views regarding its possible objectives and the issues that should be addressed.

22. There was general agreement that such a conference should be of a political nature; however, technical and substantive issues would also have to be dealt with. Most countries that favoured holding a conference suggested that its main outcome should be a programme of action, possibly accompanied by a declaration. A few suggested that such a conference should promote the ratification of the relevant international instruments or assess the adequacy of those instruments. Regarding the preparatory process, 16 of the 20 Governments in favour of holding a conference supported holding regional meetings that would facilitate reaching a first level of agreement on difficult issues, in addition to two or three meetings of the preparatory committee. Most countries favoured the active participation of the relevant international organizations, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process and in the conference itself, which almost all the countries felt should be held in 1997 or later.

23. Recognizing that international migration and its relation to development was an important issue, the countries least in favour of a conference suggested that it should be treated by the normal machinery of the United Nations. The Commission on Population and Development had already decided to devote 1997 to the consideration of international migration and development as a special topic in its deliberations. It could also be considered by the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. Most countries that did not favour holding a conference indicated that there had already been too many global conferences and that it was wiser to work towards the implementation of the agreements reached during previous conferences than to spend scarce resources on another global conference.

24. Mr. PADILLA (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that as a result of the economic imbalances and poverty in the world, international migration was a growing phenomenon. The problem must be addressed

before the political, economic and social tensions between countries of origin and countries of destination reached crisis proportions.

25. The United Nations system had already begun to examine the problems posed by international migration and possible solutions to them, as was evident from General Assembly resolution 49/127 and chapter 10 of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, which dealt exclusively with international migration, but the cause of migrant workers and refugees had not yet really been given a hearing. He welcomed the decision of the Commission on Population and Development to devote its session in 1997 to the issues surrounding international migration and development, with particular emphasis on the linkages between migration, development, gender issues and the family. Also, the United Nations Population Fund, in its capacity as the lead agency in the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, had established a working group on international migration under the leadership of the International Labour Organization. Nevertheless, some countries would have liked to avoid a conference on international migration and development, out of fatigue or, worse, worries about the cost.

26. The series of large conferences held in recent years had helped to raise awareness in the international community of the important issues concerned and to convince Governments to rethink their national policy. An international conference held under the auspices of the United Nations would allow Member States to study all aspects of the important problems of migration and development and to demonstrate their interest in it.

27. Ms. MENÉNDEZ (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union had had the opportunity to deal with the issue of international migration and development at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva in July 1995, and as nothing new had arisen since then, the statement made at that time remained totally valid. In the interests of cutting costs and avoiding useless repetition of the same position, her delegation had made copies of that statement available to all delegations.

28. Mr. SERSALE DI CERISANO (Argentina) endorsed the general statement on the issue made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77, and said he would only deal with the controversial points. As the Economic and Social Council had not taken any decision on the matter and as very few countries had expressed their thoughts on the possibility of holding a United Nations conference on international migration and development, it was an issue which should be considered at the highest political level.

29. As far as the key questions were concerned, the General Assembly was better placed than other bodies of the United Nations system to deal with such a broad issue from an intersectoral viewpoint and in the presence of all the actors. The discussion should focus on migrant workers, not on refugees or displaced persons, and the problem should be addressed from the point of view of both the countries of origin and the countries of destination. While studying the economic and social aspects of migration, including the environment, health,

education, legislation, immigration policies and urban development, particular attention should be paid to unemployment, which was the key factor.

30. The Organization had not yet given those questions all the attention they deserved, as was shown by the fact that the International Organization for Migration did not have the standing of a large specialized agency. It was therefore essential that the General Assembly should make a decision at the current session, its fiftieth, on an issue which would certainly be one of the major concerns the world would have to deal with in the years to come, and that it should not abandon its role in favour of unilateral solutions, which had already proved to be ineffective.

31. At the procedural level, on the question of whether or not the conference should be convened, the holding of a conference was not an end in itself. What mattered was the process of preparation, which gave all the actors the chance to review regional experiences and the issues as a whole. In order to do that, the Secretariat should set up a liaison centre to carry out those studies and the International Organization for Migration should be given a stronger mandate in that area. The Administrative Committee on Coordination assumed particular importance in that respect and the United Nations Population Fund should also go beyond its task of being responsible for the Inter-Agency Task Force. Lastly, the role of the General Assembly in migration and development should be defined so that the United Nations, instead of ignoring the problem, fulfilled its responsibilities to develop a global, concerted response to a question of international significance.

32. Mrs. RADUCHOWSKA-BROCHWICZ (Poland) said that the United Nations system had for a long time attached great importance to the issue of international migration, as shown by the action taken by its various departments, programmes, specialized agencies and other concerned bodies.

33. Moreover, the programmes of action of the major conferences held recently had sections devoted to that issue. For example, in the case of the World Summit for Social Development, chapters had been devoted to the social needs of refugees, displaced persons, asylum seekers and documented and undocumented migrants, while the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women had taken an interest in the fate of migrant women. One could also mention the work of the Population Division and the Statistical Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, and the decision taken by the Commission on Population and Development to devote its 1997 session to examining the issues related to international migration and development.

34. As such a complex issue required very careful thought and better coordination of international action, while at the same time it was important not to lose sight of the current financial constraints, her delegation believed that the General Assembly was the appropriate body to discuss the matter and that all the possibilities offered by the existing machinery should be explored before considering the convening of an international conference.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.